



# **Initial Achievement Level Descriptors and Update on Key Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Activities**

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**Presentation to EDCO Liaisons  
April 9, 2013**



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State Superintendent  
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# Overview

- Common Core State Standards
- Initial Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs)
  - Collaboration between higher education and K–12 educators
  - Development of ALDs
  - Types of ALDs
  - Performance levels described by ALDs
- College Content Readiness Policy
- Next Steps
- Additional Resources



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# Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

- Define the knowledge and skills students need for college and career
- Developed voluntarily and cooperatively by states; 45 states have adopted
- Provide clear, consistent standards in English language arts (ELA)/literacy and mathematics



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# Assessment of CCSS

As part of the federal assessment grant, Smarter Balanced must provide:

- Rigorous assessment of progress toward “**college and career readiness**”
- **Common cut scores** across all Consortium states



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# Smarter Balanced ALDs

1. Policy ALDs
2. Range ALDs
3. Threshold ALDs
4. Reporting ALDs



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# Smarter Balanced Initial ALDs

- Articulate the knowledge and skills expected of students at different levels of performance.
- Created along with a college readiness policy
- Support development of reporting ALDs
- Support development career readiness policy



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# Smarter Balanced Initial ALDs

- Developed concurrently with test development.
- Important step in preparing for standard setting.



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# Collaboration Between Higher Education and K–12 Educators

Representatives of higher education worked closely with kindergarten through grade twelve (K–12) educators on the development of the Smarter Balanced assessments, including the development of the initial ALDs and college content readiness policy.

This partnership is important because a goal of Smarter Balanced is that student performance on the grade eleven summative assessments is used as evidence of readiness for entry-level, credit-bearing college courses in a manner similar to that of California's EAP tests.



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# Initial ALDs Development

- Drafting Workshop October 2012:
  - 30 K–12 panelists (all governing states represented)
  - 2 California K–12 educators participated
  - 21 higher education panelists from two- and four-year colleges and universities (all but one governing state represented)
  - 2 California higher education representatives participated



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# Initial ALDs Development

- Three rounds of review:
  - Public review 11/17/12 – 1/15/13
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> public review 2/4/13 – 2/20/13
  - Pre-vote review 3/5/13 – 3/19/13
- CDE and SBE staff also provided feedback in the first public review period



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# Initial ALDs Development

- Governing states reached a consensus and approved initial ALDs (excluding the college readiness policy) March 20, 2013
- Initial ALDs subject to further refinement after pilot and field tests
- Reporting ALDs to be created after standard setting in summer of 2014



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# Policy ALDs

- **Use:** Test development and conceptualization
- **Purpose:** Set tone for the rigor of performance standards expected by sponsoring agency
- **Audience:** Policy makers



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# Range ALDs

- **Use:** Item-writing guidance
- **Purpose:** Define content range and limits
- **Audience:** Item writers and test developers



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# Threshold ALDs

- **Use:** Cut-score recommendation and standard-setting guidance
- **Purpose:** Define minimum performance required at each achievement level
- **Audience:** Standard-setting panelists



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# Reporting ALDs

*To be developed after completion of pilot and field tests and standard setting.*

- **Use:** Test-score interpretation
- **Purpose:** Describe the knowledge, skills, and processes that test takers demonstrate and indicate the knowledge and skills that must be developed to attain the next level of achievement
- **Audience:** Stakeholders, such as parents, students, teachers, K–12 leaders, and higher education officials



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# Policy ALDs: Four Levels

- *Level 4:* Student demonstrates **thorough understanding of and ability to apply** the English language arts and literacy (mathematics) knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers, as specified in the Common Core State Standards.
- *Level 3:* Student demonstrates **adequate understanding of and ability to apply** the English language arts and literacy (mathematics) knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers, as specified in the Common Core State Standards.



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# Policy ALDs: Four Levels

- *Level 2:* Student demonstrates **partial understanding of and ability to apply** the English language arts and literacy (mathematics) knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers, as specified in the Common Core State Standards.
- *Level 1:* Student demonstrates **minimal understanding of and ability to apply** the English language arts and literacy (mathematics) knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers, as specified in the Common Core State Standards.



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# Range ALDs

- Describes expected students' content-specific knowledge and performance within each achievement level
- Uses grade level common core state standards tested by the Smarter Balanced Test.



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# Threshold ALDs

- Within an achievement level range, describes the minimum performance within that range
- Key for standard setting, demarcation point between achievement levels



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# Draft Initial College Content Readiness Policy

The initial ALDs and draft initial college content readiness policy framework are part of a critical effort to ensure that the grade 11 summative assessment can be used as evidence that students:

- are ready for entry-level, transferable, credit-bearing courses in English and mathematics; and
- should be exempted from remedial coursework.

The draft college content readiness definition is focused on the core areas of ELA/literacy and mathematics described by the CCSS.



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# Draft Initial College Content Readiness Policy

- Consensus not reached for draft initial college content readiness policy
- Concerns raised by higher education leads
- Revised policy will be voted on by Consortium mid-April



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# Important Factors

1. Content readiness focus.
2. The importance of using multiple measures.
3. Support for emerging approaches to developmental education.
4. Mathematics requirements for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) majors.
5. College admission policies.
6. Score expiration.
7. Support for students at levels 1 and 2.



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# Content Readiness Focus

College readiness encompasses a wide array of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, not all of which will be measured by the Smarter Balanced assessments.

For this reason, Smarter Balanced narrowed the focus of its college readiness definition to “content readiness” in ELA/literacy and mathematics.



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# Multiple Measures

Smarter Balanced fully supports the use of multiple measures to determine student course placement.



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# Emerging Approaches to Developmental Education

To clearly communicate high expectations and create an incentive for schools, teachers, and students, the college content readiness policy asks colleges to guarantee students with strong performance on the Smarter Balanced summative assessments exemption from remedial or developmental course.

It does not, however, preclude colleges from ultimately placing students who perform below the content readiness standard into credit-bearing courses; this decision is left to the discretion of individual colleges and universities or college and university systems.



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# Requirements for Advanced Mathematics

The CCSS were designed to prepare all students for entry-level college mathematics and statistics courses that typically require Algebra II or its equivalent as a prerequisite. The CCSS also include a set of standards for additional mathematics that students should learn in order to take advanced courses such as calculus. Because the Summative Assessment only assesses knowledge and skills required of all students, it does not include items and tasks aligned to these standards. The College Content-readiness Policy assumes that colleges will need to assess additional evidence for students seeking to enter more advanced mathematics courses.



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# College Admission Policies

The content readiness policy operates within the context of existing institutional admission policies; open admission institutions will serve many students who do not meet the college content readiness performance benchmark and highly selective institutions may not admit students who score at level three or four on the assessment.

Use of the Smarter Balanced assessment in college or university admission decisions is a matter of institutional discretion; however, the assessment was not designed for this purpose.



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# Score Expiration

Consistent with the policy framework, Smarter Balanced recommends that scores only be considered valid for students who matriculate directly from high school to college.



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# Support for Levels 1 and 2

States and districts will make decisions about support for students performing at levels 1 and 2. They may draw from an array of existing resources.

There are a number of projects underway that offer model courses and other types of interventions that schools and colleges can implement to assist students in addressing academic deficiencies before leaving high school for example:

- Southern Regional Education Board project on Transition Courses
- Carnegie Foundation Quantway/Statway project
- California State University Expository Reading and Writing Course

States may choose to adopt and customize existing resources or build their own.



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# Next Steps

- With the initial ALDs approved, the governing states may now focus on working together with the K–12 and higher education representatives to refine language and approve the college content readiness policy.
- The Smarter Balanced overall claim asserts that a student can demonstrate career readiness in addition to college readiness. Smarter Balanced is working with experts in career readiness to determine how the assessment can best advise students on their readiness for postsecondary career pursuits.



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# Next Steps

- After completion of the pilot test, field testing, establish cut scores points for performance levels during standard-setting, develop reporting ALDs, and re-evaluate initial ALDs.
- **Validation.** It will be important to validate the chosen cut scores through an array of studies, including longitudinal studies of students who completed the Smarter Balanced assessments in Grade 11 and subsequently entered higher education as well as studies that allow colleges and universities to compare student performance on the Smarter Balanced assessment with known measures (existing admission and placement tests).



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# Additional Resources

- March 2013 SBE Agenda, Information Item 9:
  - <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr13/agenda201303.asp>
- Smarter Balanced Initial ALDs and College Readiness Policy Web Page:
  - <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/achievement-level-descriptors-and-college-readiness/>



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# Questions?



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# Update on Key Consortium Activities

- Spring 2013 Pilot Test
  - Participation Status Update
  - Changes to Volunteer Pilot Test
- Technology Update
- Digital Library Update



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# Spring 2013 Pilot Test — California Update

## In California:

- Over 1,400 schools are scheduled to participate in the scientific pilot test
- Over 360,000 students in grades 3 through 11 are scheduled to participate in the English-language arts or mathematics pilot tests



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# Spring 2013 Pilot Test — Smarter Balanced Update

Across member states:

- Over one million students in grades 3 through 11 are scheduled to participate in the English-language arts or mathematics pilot tests
- Over 161,000 tests have started and 131,000 tests have been completed
- All governing states have had students complete test



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# Spring 2013 Pilot Test — Preliminary Results from Student Survey

| Question  |             |               |
|---|-------------|---------------|
| Which test did you take?                                    | ELA<br>56%  | Math<br>44%   |
| Are you male or female?                                     | Male<br>50% | Female<br>50% |
|   | YES         | NO            |
| Did you take the Training Test sometime before this test?   | 31%         | 69%           |
| Did you have enough time to do your best work on this test? | 88%         | 12%           |



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# Spring 2013 Pilot Test — Preliminary Results from Student Survey

| Statement   | Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree     | Neither | Somewhat Disagree     | Strongly Disagree     |
|---|----------------|--------------------|---------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The instructions I received from my teachers/proctor were clear.                  | 61%            | 25%                | 8%      | 3%                    | 3%                    |
| I like taking the test on the computer.   | 27%            | 25%                | 17%     | 10%                   | 21%                   |
| The directions were easy to understand.   | 31%            | 32%                | 14%     | 12%                   | 11%                   |
|   | Very Satisfied | Somewhat Satisfied | Neither | Somewhat Dissatisfied | Strongly Dissatisfied |
| Overall, how satisfied were you with this particular computer testing experience? | 17%            | 33%                | 23%     | 12%                   | 15%                   |



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# Practice Test

- Formerly called the Volunteer Pilot Test
- Available to all schools, districts, parents, policymakers, and other stakeholders
- Access will begin on May 29, 2013
- Access will continue until implementation of operational test



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# Practice Test

- Complete test forms will be used
  - One test form for each grade and content area
  - Following test blueprints
- Access to accommodations
  - Text-to-speech
  - Item-level pop-up Spanish glossaries for construct-irrelevant terms (Math tests only)
  - Braille
  - American Sign Language



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# Technology Update

- Types of devices used and percentages during pilot test:

| Device     | Smarter Balanced Percentage | California Percentage |
|------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Android    | 0.00                        | 0.00                  |
| ChromeBook | 0.40                        | 0.84                  |
| OSX        | 12.29                       | 17.35                 |
| iPad       | 0.64                        | 1.49                  |
| Linux      | 0.35                        | 1.07                  |
| Windows    | 86.32                       | 79.24                 |



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# Digital Library Update

- In February, the Smarter Balanced digital library contract was awarded to Wireless Generation
  - Responsible for creating professional development materials
  - Convening a national panel of experts in formative practices to develop policy to guide the development and selection of resources



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# Digital Library Update

- Upcoming opportunity for teacher involvement
  - Recruits participants for the State Network of Educators (SNE)
    - Recruitment of the SNE expected to begin spring 2013 and be completed by August 2013
  - Provides leadership to the content-level and grade-level groups represented in the SNE



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# For Further Information

## CDE Transition Office

[sbac@cde.ca.gov](mailto:sbac@cde.ca.gov)

916-445-8517

## Technology Readiness Coordinator

[sbac-itreadiness@cde.ca.gov](mailto:sbac-itreadiness@cde.ca.gov)

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Web Site

<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/>

## CDE Smarter Balanced Web Page

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalanced.asp>